

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE WEST DELTA FIELD

HON. RICHARD H. BAKER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 25, 1998

Mr. BAKER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to join my colleagues Mr. Tauzin and Mr. John in introducing legislation that will correct a wrong suffered by the State of Louisiana over a decade ago.

I believe that all of my colleagues know that most of the Federal Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas development occurs off the coast of Louisiana and, indeed, off the coast of my Congressional district. Large portions of the Gulf of Mexico are among the very few areas of the OCS where offshore drilling is not prohibited by the Administration's recently announced leasing moratorium.

To put the contribution of the State of Louisiana in perspective, in fiscal year 1997 \$3.2 billion of the slightly over \$4 billion of OCS revenue received by the Federal government was generated off the coast of Louisiana. Louisiana has been making this type of contribution to the Federal government's effort to develop its oil and gas resources every year beginning in the early 1950's.

Throughout the entire history of Federal oil and gas development off the coast of Louisiana, the state and the Department of the Interior have cooperated on the development of oil and gas resources that might underlie both the state and Federal offshore waters. Obviously, the interest of our state and our delegation is that the revenues generated by the development of oil and gas resources owned by the people of Louisiana be returned to the treasury of the state of Louisiana. Where oil and gas resources occur in underground formations that underlie both state and Federal waters, the state and the Federal government have developed these areas through cooperative agreements that ensure that neither sovereign develops the resources of the other.

Unfortunately, this spirit of cooperation broke down in the mid-1980's in the development of a natural gas field along the seaward boundary of Louisiana called the West Delta Field. For the first and only time in the history of Federal OCS development off the coast of Louisiana, the Department of the Interior refused to cooperate with Louisiana in protecting Louisiana's resources from being developed by Federal lessees. As a result, Federal lessees drained over \$18 million of Louisiana's natural gas, the revenues from which went to the Federal treasury rather than the State of Louisiana's treasury. In 1989, an Independent Fact Finder appointed by the Secretary of the Interior at the direction of Congress confirmed these facts. Section 6004 of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 authorized an appropriation to repay the State of Louisiana and its lessees for the \$18 million of gas developed improperly by the Federal lessees, plus interest. Today, the total authorized payment to the State and its lessees, with interest, is approximately \$32 million.

The State of Louisiana and its lessees have never received this money. Therefore, this legislation authorizes an alternative means of compensating the State and its lessees. Under this legislation, the state lessee in the West Delta Field would be authorized to withhold its Federal royalty payments on other OCS production in the Gulf of Mexico, using these funds to pay the State of Louisiana and itself until the authorization in Section 6004 of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (U.S.C. 2701 note) is satisfied. At that point, the lessee would resume its royalty payments to the Department of the Interior.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come to close this unhappy chapter in the relationship between the State and Federal government on Federal OCS oil and gas development. Louisiana has been a good host to the Federal government with respect to OCS development. Louisiana expects the Federal government to honor the authorization enacted in 1990. I respectfully encourage all of my colleagues to support this long-overdue legislation and ensure its swift enactment this year before Congress departs in the coming month.

IN RECOGNITION OF 1998 LAWSUIT ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK IN THE STATE OF OHIO

HON. PAUL E. GILLMOR

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 25, 1998

Mr. GILLMOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to an important series of events taking place this week in the State of Ohio. The week of Monday, September 21 through Friday, September 26, 1998, has been officially designated by Governor George V. Voinovich as Lawsuit Abuse Awareness Week.

This recognition works to ensure that citizens throughout the State of Ohio are better informed about the ongoing concerns for lawsuit abuse. To this end, the Ohio Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse (OCALA) has undertaken a public awareness campaign to voice their concerns and continue to draw attention to the impact of lawsuit abuse on Ohio's consumers and economy. Citizens from all across Ohio have helped the campaign and have organized behind OCALA to spread the message.

Mr. Speaker, lawsuit abuse is not merely a concern for the State of Ohio. Lawsuit abuse is an issue with both State and national implications, and undoubtedly affects each American. Unfortunately, our society has become very prone to litigate in recent years. In fact, some estimates show that the number of lawsuits filed each year is almost 300,000. The sheer number of these lawsuits requires millions of dollars in expenses and thousands of hours from employees. There is no question that litigation abuse is a deterrent to economic growth.

As the number of lawsuits continues to climb, the impact on the American public is evident. The increasing number of lawsuits results in higher operating costs for businesses, the withdrawal of certain products from the market, and a weakening of growth and expansion. These costs are inevitably passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices for goods and services, lost opportunity, and fewer jobs.

Mr. Speaker, with these serious issues facing the United States, it is increasingly important for groups like Ohio Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse to be recognized for their hard work and efforts on behalf of Ohioans and all Americans. We need the kind of dedication shown by OCALA and other groups to keep up the battle with lawsuit abuse and overall legal reform. I would urge my colleagues to stand and join me in recognizing the week of Monday, September 21 through Saturday, September 26, 1998 as "Ohio Lawsuit Abuse Awareness Week."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 25, 1998

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, due to illness I was unavoidably detained and missed roll call votes 457, 458, 459, and 460. Had I been present I would have voted "yes" on roll call vote 457, H.R. 4112, the Legislative Branch Appropriations conference report for fiscal year 1999. On roll call vote 458, I would have voted "yes" on H.R. 3616, the Department of Defense Authorization conference report for fiscal year 1999. On roll call 459, I would have voted "no" on the Watt Amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 3736, the Workforce Improvement and Protection Act. On final passage of H.R. 3736, roll call vote 460, I would have voted "yes."

IN HONOR OF ST. WENCESLAUS DAY

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 25, 1998

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the annual celebration of the Feast of St. Wenceslaus which will be celebrated at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish on September 27, 1998.

St. Wenceslaus is the patron saint of Bohemia. He was born near Prague in 903. His father was the Duke of Bohemia as Wenceslaus was growing up, his grandmother, also a saint, taught him the values of Christianity. In the year 922, when an anti-Christian faction killed Wenceslaus' father and took over the government, Wenceslaus staged a coup and was

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